

# **NORTHAMPTON POLICING REVIEW COMMISSION**

## **Alternatives to Policing Subcommittee**

Meeting Minutes  
Monday November 9, 2020  
6:00 PM-8:00 PM  
Remote Meeting

### **Join the Remote Meeting:**

- **Video Conference:** <https://bit.ly/3eoUFhF>
- **Or by telephone, call:** 1-929-436-2866, Meeting ID: 948 7461 0310, Passcode: 492742

### **1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order by Booker Bush, Policing Review Commission Co-Chair at 6:05PM.

### **ROLL CALL:**

Booker Bush, Co-Chair	Present
Javier Luengo-Garrido, Co-Chair	Present
Alex Jarrett	Present
Dana Olivo	Present
Carol Owen	Present

## **ANNOUNCEMENT OF ZOOM RECORDING**

Court made an announcement that this meeting was being recorded for the public record and would be available on Northampton Open Media, as well as, the City of Northampton website.

### **1. Public Comment (6:30-7pm)**

Community member Hiladagard Freedman shared she believes there is crime. She shared last week there was a death in her building. She suggested there may be a methodology for a better more economic police force with a psychologist working in tandem with police.

Community member Tay Tay (they/them) shared they are here to speak about the combination of social services working with the police. They work with unhoused people in Amherst and Hadley. They feel clear that police and social workers already work together and that the process gives police, courts and DA offices more data to use. They spoke about the opioid task force, social services, and police are reporting use of drugs together. They shared community members are getting kicked out of shelters. They believe power dynamics are remaining within social services and it harms people. They suggest peer run and community run initiatives.

Community Emily Coffin (LICSW, she/ her) shared she feels there is an opportunity to shape a program and to take the time versus defaulting to baby steps. She shared this is not the time to be conservative and that starting and dreaming big is important. She shared social services by definition has racist power dynamics that cannot be reformed. She offered community care and mutual aid networks we can build, that there are resources to do it, and that it takes thinking outside of the box. She shared there has been \$880,000 democratically reclaimed from police and would like to figure out how to reallocate that funding to alternatives to policing.

Community member Jose Adastra stated there is unprecedented corruption in Massachusetts police and corrections facilities (especially in terms of exposing people to COVID), as well as in the Springfield Department that it is extending to Northampton. He shared pairing a cop and a social worker is continued carceral violence and offers there are community lead options without police.

Community member Kat Freeman (Social worker in Hampshire county) offers a Co-Responder program would be harmful for all the residents of this county. She shares their cities have launched crisis response programs that do not involve police that have worked which address underlying issues and get people resources they need. She thinks looking to communities that are most impacted for guidance around next steps.

Community Ya Ping Douglass offered they hope the committee is able to look into alternatives completely outside of police. They offer that Service Net and CSO (Clinical & Support Options) perpetuate policing. They mention a Decarcerating Care video and that this kind of oppression that comes out of mainstream psychiatric care. They offer we can be a leader pursuing crisis alternatives with crisis workers and no police where communities are always consulted.

Community member Dean Colpack (Social worker at Service Net) shared a Co-Responder program would result in people being victimized, pathologized and ending up in jail. He believes when police are involved they're going to do their job and police people and find something

criminal going on. He states we're just sending folks into the system in various ways. He states a peer-led model would be the ideal way to approach this way of helping the people who live here and deserve to have as much kindness and care as everyone else who doesn't find themselves constantly being policed.

Commissioner Booker Bush thanks community member Ya Ping Douglass for the materials they sent.

Administrative Assistant Noa Coffey-Moore shares they grew up in the Pioneer valley and are excited to be here and a part of this work.

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido welcomes Noa Coffey-Moore and thanks Commissioner Dana Olivio for selecting the person who will be working with us and states we have one more person who would like to share.

Community member Richard Hendrick shares he believes in moving out of the realm of police and into a social worker model. Feels impressed as a person who has done this work in Springfield, Greenfield, and Northampton. He shares he had experience involving the police and would veer away from this option at all costs. Feels avoiding police interaction with this model is an option that should be taken seriously.

## **2. Approval of Minutes of October 28, 2020**

Commissioner Booker Bush entertains motion to approve minutes.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett mentions he may not have received the minutes.

Commissioner Booker Bush points to hyperlink in agenda and offers it is close to word for word minutes.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett moves to approve the minutes.

All Commissioners move to approve the minutes

Minutes of October 28, 2020 are approved

## **3. Discussion with representative from Northampton Police (7pm)**

Commissioner Booker Bush apologizes and explains there was a recommendation at the last meeting to have a police officer to speak with the commission. After the initial message with the Chief of Police, who asked for additional information, Commissioner Booker Bush did not offer the information. He suggests we invite them to the next meeting.

## **4. Calls for Mental Health-Related Issues**

Commissioner Javier Luengo- Garrido would appreciate having someone from the Police department attend and would still like to understand the narrative Police are using to justify their need for mental health related issues.

Commissioner Carol Owen seconds Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido's statement. She shares she is not advocating for a Co-responder model. She mentions one of the articles said, of the demographics of death by police nationwide, 25% have qualified for a serious mental illness. She shares that it feels important to look at an interview of a police officer who could meet with the Commission who has experience with the rationale behind why police are called to do this. She states the commission will make more progress if it understands what it is that it's trying to extract in terms of information when it invites them.

Commissioner Javier Luengo- Garrido agrees with Commissioner Carol Owen's statement and would like to add that a substantial part of the Alternatives Subcommittee is to recommend in the report, alternatives the Commission sees fit to implement. He shares it would be helpful to understand the narrative which is white supremacist to craft a report for why it should be changed.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett seconds what Commissioner Javier Luengo- Garrido and Commissioner Carol Owen stated. He offers the Commission will need to think about- where the line is when there is a safety issue where the police will need to be called. He mentions this is why some would say that's why there is a Co-responder approach. He shares he would like to understand the current process. He wonders if we have a Co-responder program within the police department now.

Commissioner Carol Owen states Service Net used to offer a Crisis Response Contract with the state which 10 years ago switched to Clinical Support options (CSO). She shares they allegedly have a mobile unit that goes independently without police to evaluate risk. However, it's not active and when family members who are concerned about their family members make a call to dispatch, they are directed to the ER. She doesn't know how involved Police are in the transport. She wonders about an inquiry into this process.

Commissioner Booker Bush thanks Commissioner Carol Owen for the articles she sent. He feels surprised to learn that in these articles about the kinds of different models (crisis intervention groups or Co-responder models with a social worker), that all of the writers agreed it's not a well understood process yet. He states no one likes the way it works yet and that they're searching for a consistent way of describing the process because everyone's doing it in a different way. He shares there is data that fewer people are arrested when this process occurs and some people say the police who are involved are happier because it's less work on them. In regards to Commissioner Alex Jarrett's question about who decides which team goes out, Commissioner Booker Bush shares that all the writers note the mental health system didn't work well in each place (United States, Australia, England) and they fell into asking the police to do this. Taking note of what he heard in public comment, he found this data did not include community based, peer led services. He feels getting more info about that would be useful.

Commissioner Dana Olivo wonders whether the commission can get budget info from mobile van Commissioner Carol Owen mentioned as well as whatever other resources the city is putting into mental health services that could be available already to see what's missing. She notes clearly a lot is missing.

Commissioner Javier Luengo- Garrido states it's worth mentioning housing is a big issue that often leads to this problem. He wonders what the city is doing about affordable housing. He explains he worked as a tester for the housing authority and had a bad, disrespectful, unthoughtful experience. He invites the commission to think about this in terms of their report because often this issue is more about people having a lack of services, not people behaving in a pervasive way.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett agrees with Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido about housing. He explains he served on the Housing Partnership board that was tasked with working on affordable housing. He states they put out a report, "Unlocking Opportunity and Assessment of the Barriers to Fair Housing" which includes recommendations. He suggests the commission could look at the report and see what those recommendations are or ask the Housing Partnership Board for its thoughts on this issue.

Commissioner Booker Bush asks for a synopsis of the Housing Partnership board's recommendations.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett states there are eleven areas the board identified. He offers to look it up and bring it back to the commission.

Commissioner Booker Bush offers the commission can ask for that information. He explains because members are hearing that part of what is so uncomfortable about how the police act is how they are dealing with the unhoused. He states the Human Rights Commission is concerned it's going to get worse with winter, with COVID and with end of eviction notices. He wonders how the commission should continue to pursue budgetary questions that Commissioner Dana Olivo raised. He states, other data the Commission should look into, is mental health related calls in police logs and how many issues due to homelessness are the police involved with.

Commissioner Javier Luengo- Garrido wonders if there's any way to have easy access to report Commissioner Alex Jarrett mentioned.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett said he is looking but it's difficult to find. He states the city website is hard to use.

Commissioner Booker Bush states if he was a person looking for help, the website is less transparent than we would all like it to be. He wonders how the commission can get more data on alternatives to policing.

Commissioner Carol Owen states an important issue is talking to local people and accessing studies that have already been done. She explains there are advocacy groups representing the most vulnerable groups the commission is talking about. She mentions the Freedom Center who are people with lived experience of mental health issues. She wonders about getting in contact with a housing advocate.

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido offers to do outreach to nationwide organizations doing peer-led programs who have diminished the footprint of the police department.

Commissioner Carol Owen shares there was one article which states there is almost zero about folks with intellectual disabilities who are at particular danger of being injured by police on the street. She wonders whether the commission should talk to someone at the ARC (Association for Retarded Citizens) which is in fact an advocacy organization for people with developmental

disabilities, and shares there maybe others that are more contemporary who could speak to people having bad experiences with police.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett names the Denver Alliance for Street Health Response and the Denver Pilot Program as potential organizations. He mentions community member Ya Ping Douglas said the commission may be able to get Vinnie Cervantes to come speak.

Commissioner Booker Bush shares he got an email from Wendy Foxman informing him where the full report is about housing. He shares the link in the chat.

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido encourages everyone who is part of the audience to reach out to people at commission to connect. He shares the commission wouldn't have learned this if Ya Ping Douglas didn't send them these resources. He hopes we can get to the point where community members feel comfortable reaching out and meeting with commissioners.

Commissioner Booker Bush thanks Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido for his sentiments.

Commissioner Dana Olivo wonders if there is a way the commission can have conversations with people who are personally affected by their interactions with the police who might be having mental health or substance issues, as well as just being Black walking down the street. She shares it could be really powerful to have personal accounts in the report the commission puts forth.

Commissioner Booker Bush shares he feels concerned about people whose voices aren't in the room. He wonders how to get those voices in the room and wonders whether the group can find ways to get Northampton residents in dialogue with one another. He notes, these voices need to inform us of what the solution should be.

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido agrees with Commissioner Dana Olivo and feels concerned about privacy and retaliation. He states that's why it's important for members to connect with activists. He explains, some people might not feel comfortable and he wants to be cognizant the commissioners are speaking from a place of privilege. Further, that he gets to say things about the Northampton website but that not everyone has that sort of privilege. He shares, speaking one on one could allow commission members to get more information while reducing risk to community members.

Commissioner Dana Olivo agrees with Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido.

Commissioner Booker Bush mentions part of the agenda for tomorrow is thinking about how to structure the public sessions. He asks the commission how they can get more of these voices into the room. He agrees with Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido about the privilege to feel safe sharing experiences.

Commissioner Dana Olivo wonders whether they can get access to performance review and professional development records for police around mental health. She wonders how police are reviewed for responding to different situations as well as what professional development police officers are getting around responding to mental health situations.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett offers there could be some overlap with the Policing Policies subcommittees and wonders whether they can ask them that question.

Commissioner Dana Olivo agrees.

Commissioner Booker Bush asks whether they will be asked to report to the larger commission.

Commissioner Dana Olivo confirms.

Commissioner Booker Bush asks the commission what things they will want to communicate to the larger commission.

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido wonders how the police police themselves and how internal investigations and complaints are dealt with.

Commissioner Booker Bush shares looking at the data on the police website provides information about domestic violence calls but does not provide who is in the room. He adds further, on the website you can see how many calls, arrests, and criminal actions there were but you can't see if someone from safe passage was there and how often that occurs. He's also curious about how many housing and mental health related calls are made and whether this falls under (for example) defacing property or the like when the call is really about something else.

Commissioner Carol Owen shares the importance of qualitative data and testimony. She shares reports are often written by the HR department and may be unhelpful data for the commission. She shares the most potent data is from the advocacy groups or individuals (qualitative).

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido reads from the website and suggests that the data is more of a description or a PR exercise. It gives you an understanding of their narrative as a perfected version but it does not offer what he needs to know.

Commissioner Dana Olivo responds to Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido. She shares she imagines that has to do with funding. She wonders if one of the commission's recommendations can include what information can be available to the public and community and how detailed that information needs to be.

Commissioner Booker Bush shares he feels members should talk about this at the full commission meeting. He explains there's a need for the citizens to say what they'd like to be posted for the public.

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido shares the scope of the report can share the importance of data transparency. He says the numbers aren't telling him anything and it's frustrating because the commission needs to be able to understand. He shares he does not believe police should be involved with domestic violence or sexual assault. He explains further, the commission can ask for more and that it's their prerogative to make recommendations.

Commissioner Booker Bush shares it seems like some of the most dangerous calls for police is walking into a domestic violence situation. He shares further, if there's a gun or knife and willful intent, it's a hard situation to walk into.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett offers there is research around decriminalizing domestic violence and this might be the next issue the commission talks about as they continue to talk about the mental health and policing issue.

Commissioner Booker Bush shares the commission is going to be talking further about alternatives to mental health and alternatives to unhoused folks, and talking about domestic violence. He says the commission would like to understand the Northampton data better. He states police now assist people getting treatment for substance abuse issues rather than “doing arrests”.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett wonders what the commission should focus on this week and next week and how to tackle these aspects and issues.

Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido suggests there will be a connection between the issues Commissioner Booker Bush mentions and suggests keeping them in that order.

Commissioner Booker Bush suggests the commission stop adding more to the agenda for next week. He asks the commission what information they want to transmit to the larger commission at the next meeting.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett asks how much time they will have to report back.

The commissioners discuss when the next meeting should be and how long they should meet for. They discuss whether to meet on alternating weeks.

Commissioner Booker Bush asks if there will be time for the subcommittee to report back to the full commission.

Commissioner Dana Olivo confirms.

Commissioner Booker Bush asks who would like to present and offers he would be glad to speak on behalf of the committee.

Commissioner Carol Owen shares she likes the collaborative approach of this subcommittee.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett agrees. He shares he doesn't have a sense of how many minutes each committee will have and whether they can go into depth about particular issues.

Commissioner Booker Bush asks whether there are any other comments or issues anyone would like to bring up.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett asks, when he's communicating about what should be on the agenda who should he write to? He states he doesn't want to run afoul of open meeting law.

Commissioner Booker Bush explains to involve the co-chairs and that he writes the agendas for this subcommittee.

Commissioner Alex Jarrett asks whether it should be sent to Noa Coffey-Moore as well.

Noa Coffey-Moore (Administrative Assistant) confirms.

Commissioner Booker Bush moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:06pm. Commissioner Carol Owen seconds the motion. Commissioner Javier Luengo-Garrido thirds the motion to adjourn. The motion adjourn is passed unanimously.